



**Online International Conference Report**  
**"How Eurasian Countries are Ensuring Preventive Measures Against COVID-19 & Their Suggestions for Other countries"**



Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad

Online Interactive Series  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2020  
1100 - 1300 hrs

Watch the Ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan sharing valuable insights on



**How Eurasian Countries are Ensuring Preventive Measures against**

**COVID-19**

*Interactive Question & Answer Session at the end of the discussion*

Join the Session via Zoom App

Meeting ID: 959 030 153

For any query contact:  
+92 318 8348237

infocgss@yahoo.com  
www.cgss.com.pk

Organized by  
Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2020

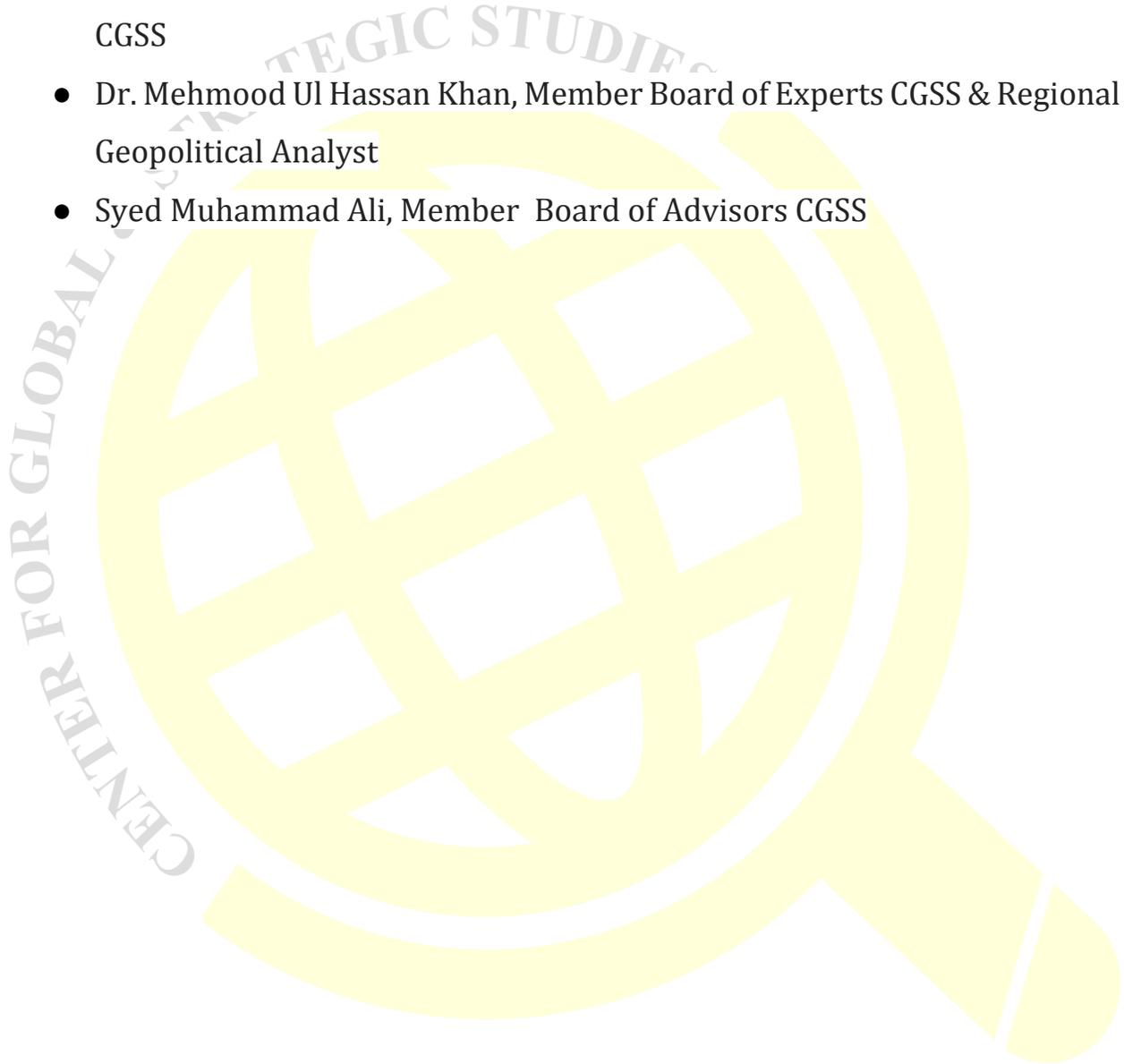
## **BRIEF OF THE EVENT**

On Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) organized an Online Conference as part of its **“Online Interactive Series”** on the topic **“How Eurasian Countries are Ensuring Preventive Measures Against COVID-19 & Their Suggestions for Other countries”**. Keeping in view the current situation of COVID-19 in Pakistan and around the world, CGSS has organized an online interactive session to bring together the representatives from the Eurasian region and Pakistan to discuss and share the preventive measures, policies, plans, programs launched and their experiences of dealing with COVID-19.

The session was attended by 25 participants, out of which 11 were panelists. The conference was moderated by Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Retd), Executive Director CGSS. The panelists included:

- His Excellency Ali Alizada, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan
- His Excellency Ismatullo Nasredin, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan
- His Excellency Akan Rakhmetullin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan
- His Excellency Furqat A. Sidikov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- Colonel Anatoly A. Fedotov, Defense Attache – Embassy of Russian Federation to Pakistan
- Colonel Mehman Novruzov, Defence Attache- Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan

- Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd), Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS
- Brigadier Mansoor Saeed (Retd), Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS
- Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua (Retd), Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS
- Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst
- Syed Muhammad Ali, Member Board of Advisors CGSS



**Opening Remarks by Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) - President CGSS**



The online conference was commenced by Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery (Retd) HI (M). He briefly described the spread of COVID-19 in the world and the Eurasian region, in particular he stated that no state was prepared for the spread of the Corona Virus which led to the acute effects faced by the countries all across the globe. Even the developed countries such as the USA, UK, and Italy are facing the adverse impacts of COVID-19 and are encountering several challenges to combating the virus. He further mentioned that since the environment and resources of every country are different, countries can not replicate each others' preventive models, policies, or plans. The preventive measures need to be molded according to a state's environment and the available resources. Moreover, he appreciated the preventive measures taken by the Eurasian countries which have proved to be effective in limiting the spread of the virus. Mentioning the figures of the coronavirus cases in Pakistan, he also acknowledged the efficient role played by Pakistan's government in combating the virus. Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery concluded by highlighting the need for a joint strategy devised by Pakistan and Eurasian Countries.

## **Brigadier Mansoor Saeed, Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS**



Brig. Mansoor (Retd) has acknowledged the initiative taken by the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) of raising awareness regarding COVID-19. He educated the panelists about the Tiger Force Program (Voluntary Force) launched by the Prime Minister, Pakistan. He explained the dynamics of the Tiger Force, its functions, and the SOPs under which the Tiger Force will be performing in the coming days.

Besides, Brigadier Mansoor (Retd) appreciated the timely and efficient measures taken by the Prime Minister, Imran Khan to control the worsening of the COVID-19 situation in Pakistan. Analyzing the current situation, he stated that even though accurate measures have been taken by the government to limit the spread of the virus. The launch of the Tiger Force is a protective measure taken in case the situation gets worse and Pakistan has to impose complete lockdown.

He congratulated China on being the only country that has been able to overcome this virus. Beijing, to control the spread of the virus, had to limit the mobility of 20 million people by imposing the complete lockdown. Comparing Pakistan's situation and available resources with China, he mentioned a complete lockdown is not a suitable option for Pakistan. Informing the Panelist, he highlighted a few of the negative impacts of complete lockdown which include an economic crisis at the national level, further deterioration of the living standards of the lower class, and shrinking middle class.

Discussing the Tiger Force, Brigadier Mansoor (Retd) informed the panelists regarding the functioning of the Tiger Force. The tiger Force will be operating at the district/ tehsil level at various assignments. The voluntary Tiger Force will be properly trained and provided equipment. The responsibilities of the Tiger Force include:

- Identification of the Corona positive patients and taking appropriate measures to facilitate them.
- Delivery of food items to the poor, unemployed, and the most vulnerable sections of the society.
- Assisting the relevant authorities in maintaining the Law & Order situation in different parts of the country.
- Any other relevant task assigned by the civil administration will be performed by this voluntary force.

Brigadier Saeed (Retd) concluded by briefly informing about the SOPs under which the voluntary force will be working.

**His Excellency Ali Alizada, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan**



His Excellency Ali Alizada informed the panelists that Azerbaijan has partially closed its borders to limit cross-border transportation. Also, the visa registration through “ASAN Viza” electronic portal is suspended for 45 days to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The Ambassador has mentioned that to prevent the threat of coronavirus disease in the territory of Azerbaijan, Task Force under the Cabinet of Ministers was established (consisting of heads of relevant government agencies and institutions). Special medical institutions have been established in Azerbaijan for laboratory diagnosis of coronavirus.

As soon as the first coronavirus case was reported in Azerbaijan, all kindergartens, schools, and universities were closed. Furthermore, the Azerbaijan government has banned mass gatherings, closed all cultural and entertainment facilities, adopted specific guidelines for cafes, restaurants, shops, malls, and public transportation. The citizens and foreign nationals are required, by sending a free text message to a certain number, to obtain permission to leave home to buy essentials such as groceries, medicine, visit a medical facility or to take a necessary trip. To facilitate the public, online services have been launched as medicine and food delivery.

Highlighting the significant step taken by the government, His Excellency Ali Alizada informed about the sharing of public awareness information on various social networks and TV.

As strict quarantine is being practiced in Azerbaijan, non-essential employees of public and private institutions were sent on paid leave in Azerbaijan. The essential employees of public and private institutions continue to start on special working regime mode by following the social distancing and other rules.

Moreover, he informed about the role being played by the Volunteer Organizations. They are playing their part by assisting the government in the

fight against COVID-19. They deliver essential products to needy people especially those who are above 65 years old.

Mentioning the efficient steps taken by the Azerbaijan government, he informed the participants about the financial assistance provided by the government. To mitigate the economic and social impact of COVID-19, the President of Azerbaijan allocated the largest share of the GDP (2.5 billion manats (\$1.47 billion) to help combat the Coronavirus pandemic. Also, business entities operating in the virus-hit sectors will receive state support such as tax benefits, privileges, and holidays, which will help them survive and be able to pay salaries to employees. The entrepreneurs will receive a state guarantee for 60 percent of their new bank's loan. The government will subsidize half of the interest on guaranteed loans from the state budget.

The social package announced by the President includes lump-sum payments in the amount of living wage to 200,000 unemployed citizens for two months, creation of 50,000 paid public jobs, tuition support program for students from socially vulnerable families, financial support program for mortgage and credit guarantee mechanism, program to support communal fees, primarily for electricity consumption of the population, and financial support program for vital passenger transport activities.

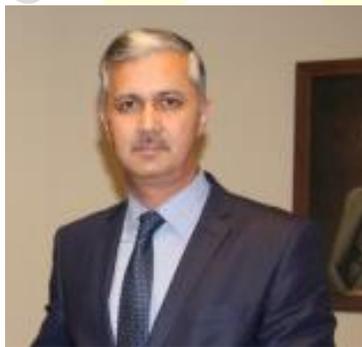
Special assistance has been provided to the healthcare sector in Azerbaijan. The salaries of doctors serving coronavirus-infected people have been increased three, four and five times.

Since the educational institutes have been closed, the Ministry of Education started broadcasting TV lessons, for students. These TV lessons cover all classes

and most subjects are under a pre-announced schedule. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education launched the “Virtual School” project aimed at ensuring its broadcasting interactivity and increasing online education opportunities.

His Excellency highlighted the fact that Azerbaijan donated 5 million US Dollars to the World Health Organization (WHO) “COVID-19 Response Fund” to support the global efforts in containing the Coronavirus pandemic. The United Nations Office in Azerbaijan has commended the Government of Azerbaijan’s efforts to contain the COVID-19 virus’s spread and supported the call and actions, introduced through the special quarantine rulings.

### **His Excellency Ismatullo Nasredin, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to Pakistan**



Informing the panelists about the coronavirus situation in Tajikistan, His Excellency Ismatullo Nasredin mentioned that to date no coronavirus cases have been reported in Tajikistan. Nevertheless, the Tajikistan government has taken all the precautionary measures to keep the country safe for its citizens. They have closed the borders to limit the cross border exchange. Furthermore, the mobility of people and vehicles are controlled to a certain extent. Air traffic has also been limited.

An Operational Center has been set up, headed by the Prime Minister. All the cabinet members of Tajikistan are part of the operational center.

Appreciating the support provided by the Uzbekistan government, His Excellency Ismatullo Nasredin extended his gratitude to the Uzbekistan

government. Also, he mentioned the significant role played by the Asian Development Bank in facilitating Tajikistan to be prepared if any case gets reported.

Highlighting the only concern faced by the Tajikistan government, the ambassador mentioned that many of the Tajikistan citizens are working abroad and the Tajik government is trying to monitor them and arranging their safe return to Tajikistan. Hence, all the Tajik embassies are required to report to the Tajik government daily regarding the coronavirus situation in their host countries.

His Excellency Ismatullo Nasredin concluded his briefing by thanking the Pakistan government and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for arranging a special flight to safely take the Tajiks (settled/working in Pakistan) back to Tajikistan.

### **His Excellency Akan Rakhmetullin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan**



His Excellency Akan Rakhmetullin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan briefly explained the preventive measures taken by the Kazakhstan government to ensure the safety of its citizens and prevent further spread of coronavirus. He informed the participants that a state of emergency (till the end of April) has been declared in Kazakhstan. All the regions in Kazakhstan are isolated from each other and various areas are sealed especially the ones where corona positive cases have been reported. This has led to the controlled

inter-region mobility of people and vehicles. Special passes and permission are needed by all the service providers in case of traveling.

Highlighting all the steps that are taken by the Kazakhstan government, the ambassador Akan Rakhmetullin mentioned that the government has declared tax relief for its citizens. They are exempted from banking tax, mortgage tax, for 3 months. Special financial assistance is provided to the people who have lost their jobs. Also, the President of Kazakhstan has announced free groceries for the most vulnerable sections of society i.e the elderly, children, disabled, and unemployed.

Another significant step mentioned by Akan Rakhmetullin was the exemption of SMEs from taxes. To support the SMEs and the local industry, the government has encouraged them to produce all the items that were initially imported from other countries.

The agriculture sector has also been financially supported by the Kazakhstan government. A relief fund of \$300 million has been allocated to facilitate the agriculture sector and the farmers.

His Excellency Akan Rakhmetullin summed up the briefing by mentioning another important measure taken by the Kazakhstan government i.e special financial assistance has been provided to the healthcare staff who have been working so closely with the corona positive cases.

## **His Excellency Furqat A. Sidiqov, Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan**



His Excellency Furat A. Sidiqov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan, before explaining the panelists all the protective measures that the Government of Uzbekistan has taken, he congratulated the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) on taking the initiative of bringing everyone together through the digital platform. He stressed the importance of sharing preventive measures, plans, and experiences to help each other enhance their respective measures.

According to him the Uzbekistan government has announced a complete lockdown in March. It has closed all air and road connections. The inter-city and within city traveling of private vehicles have been completely prohibited by the government. Special permission is required for the transportation of food and other necessary items.

He further mentioned that all educational institutions have been closed and the educational activities have been fully shifted to digital platforms. The offices have also been closed by the government. The ones operating are required to call only the essential staff to the office.

Special quarantine centers and hospitals are prepared by the government. These centers can accommodate up to 20,000 patients.

Realizing the adverse effects that COVID-19 is likely to have on the economy of Uzbekistan, the government of Uzbekistan has announced a relief package of \$1

billion. To support its citizens, significant steps have been taken by the Uzbekistan government. These include:

- The reduction of taxes by 50 percent
- Salaries for the non-essential staff who are working from home
- No one is to be fired during the quarantine period
- Parents of young children (Ages 1-8 yrs) are granted paid leaves.

His Excellency, Furqat A. Sidiqov further explained the government's instructions for the banks. Banks are required to keep their policies relaxed during the quarantine period and provide assistance to the businessmen so that no one faces bankruptcy. Not only the business community but the tourism industry has also been catered by the government. Considering the COVID-19 situation in Uzbekistan and all around the globe, tourism has been stopped which has led to negative impacts on hotels and tourist agencies. Hence, the government has announced special financial assistance packages for the tourist industry.

The Ambassador, Furqat A. Sidiqov, wrapped up by highlighting the opportunity that has emerged out of this entire situation. He stated that the situation can be taken as an opportunity for all the neighboring countries to work together against this common threat.

## Colonel Anatoly A. Fedotov, Defense Attache - Embassy of Russian Federation to Pakistan



Colonel Anatoly briefly explained the preventive measures that have been taken by the Russian government. He mentioned that strict quarantine is being practiced in Russia. The mobility of people has been controlled and a special pass is required for ordinary citizens in case they need to travel. The pass can be used only twice a week. He further stated that a voluntary force has been launched by the Russian government to help elderly citizens. The voluntary force is comprised of the Russian youth.

Mr. Anatoly, comparing the coronavirus situation in Russia with the European countries, presented the latest figures which are:

Data on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020:

- 1.3 million corona tests have been conducted in Russia
- 18,000 people have been tested positive
- 2,500 people tested negative (13<sup>th</sup> April-14<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

Mr. Anatoly concluded by suggesting a holistic and a joint approach to be taken by all the neighboring countries to combat this mutual threat.

**Dr. Mehmood-ul-Hassan, Member Advisory Board CGSS & Geo-Strategic Expert**



Dr. Mehmood-ul-Hassan, in-depth, explained all the preventive measures taken by the Eurasian countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19. According to Dr. Mehmood, all regional countries mainly Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan have initiated diversified but integrated policy measures to prevent the wide-spread of COVID-19. A variety of restrictive measures have been taken considering the prevailing international conditions and standards.

Dr. Mehmood stated that Eurasian policy measures and structural reforms were based on their “Nation Risk Assessment” due to which the reforms were systematic in their nature and implementation. The Strategic “political wisdom” and unity of “command” of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan paved the way towards sustainable socio-economic policies and their timely implementations during ongoing mega human health crisis of COVID-19.

Furthermore, he informed the panelists about the “interconnected holistic policies” announced and implemented by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan to combat COVID-19 which has drastically changed the cycles of life, processes of human survival and production channels of this planet.

Dr. Mehmood mentioned that the Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) and commercial banks have adopted a seven-day workweek, to allow individuals and businesses to convert their manat holdings into foreign currency. The COVID-19 Operational Headquarters has been formed under the Cabinet of Ministers, and working groups within various ministries and at the CBA have been tasked with developing specific measures.

The Kazakhstan President Tokayev announced a significant anti-crisis package of \$13 billion (9 percent of GDP) in late March. Various supportive measures have been taken including some trade restrictions and regulated prices for socially important goods, cash transfers to vulnerable households, access to medical care by uninsured from April 1 to July 2, and targeted assistance to affected sectors of the national economy mainly construction, agriculture, agriculture, and services.

In Russia, banks have been allowed not to worsen the credit classification of SMEs, thus avoiding additional loan loss reserves, and to value securities at their price from March 1. The CBR has introduced a new RUB 500bn facility for SME lending and reduced the interest rate on the existing RUB 175bn facility. Measures for households include the cancelation of add-ons to risk weights for mortgage loans issued before April 1 and allowing restructuring of bank loans for those with confirmed COVID-19 infections, and for those whose incomes have declined due to coronavirus spread.

After Dr. Mehmmod-ul-Hassan concluded his report, an interactive session was started where various participants either had queries for the panelists or they had to add a few comments to the briefings presented by the panelists.

**Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd), Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS**



General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd) presented his analysis of the entire situation of COVID-19 and gave a few valuable suggestions to share. According to General Lodhi, COVID-19 being a pandemic is a common threat to all the countries around the globe and hence, it requires a collective response from all the countries.

Secondly, he stressed the important role of citizens. In his view, the governments of various countries were playing an active role in dealing with the COVID-19. An equally active and responsible role needs to be played by the citizens to make the programs and initiatives taken by the government more effective.

**Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua (Retd), Senior Member Board of Advisors CGSS**



Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua (Retd) appreciated the efficient measures taken by the Central Asian Countries. He further added that despite the strict measures taken by the governments, the general public needs to take the quarantine seriously to control the spread of coronavirus. He emphasized the role that the

general masses need to play. According to Brigader Janjua, no policy can be effective if the general public fails to play its due part.

### **Air Vice-Marshal Azhar Hassan (Retd)**



Air Vice-Marshal Azhar Hassan (Retd) appreciated the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) for providing a platform where experts and representatives from various countries can come together and share their experience with COVID-19. According to AVM Azhar Hassan, a mutual cooperative strategy was required by various countries to efficiently deal with this common threat.

In his view, the biggest challenge faced by the governments at this time is the lack of cooperation by the citizens. He stated that for the preventive policies and plans to be effective and deliver the desired results, citizens need to cooperate with their governments.

**Question by the participant to** Excellency Furqat A. Sidiqov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan regarding the strategies that Uzbekistan plans to formulate to bring the Uzbek citizens back from various foreign countries.

His Excellency explained the measures taken by the Uzbekistan government. The Uzbekistan government has launched a program for its citizens who are settled in various foreign countries. Under this program, all the Uzbek embassies operating in foreign countries are required to prepare a list of all the Uzbek citizens in their host country. The list comprised of all the details of the

Uzbek citizens including their financial status. The embassies are required to constantly stay in touch with the Uzbek citizens in their host country and provide assistance to them, whenever needed.

**Question by the participant to His Excellency Akan Rakhmetullin** about the measures that are being taken by the Kazakhstan government to facilitate the agriculture sector.

His Excellency Akan Rakhmetullin briefly explained the financial support provided by the Kazakhstan government to the farmers and agriculture sector in general. A relief fund of \$300 million has been allocated to counter the adverse effects of coronavirus on the agriculture sector, Furthermore, to facilitate the farmers, they are being provided fuel at the lowest price possible.

**Syed Muhammad Ali, Member Advisory Board CGSS**



Mr. Syed Muhammed Ali, initially, acknowledged the timely initiative taken by the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) and hoped that it may prove to be beneficial for everyone involved.

He attempted to briefly sum up the entire online conference by presenting his analysis. Mr. Ali stated that the coronavirus situation needs to be dealt with at four spheres simultaneously. First, in the political domain, the relationship between the government and its public is tested. For the success of the preventive plans and policies, there needs to be an interaction between the citizens and the government. The higher the interaction and trust are, the high will be the chances of the success of the

government plans and policies. Furthermore, different political systems will determine different solutions to deal with the current situation.

Second is the cultural aspect. This deals with the responsive and responsible attitude of the general public. According to Mr. Ali, no plan or policy can be beneficial if the general public is not responsive and disciplined enough to obey.

The third is the economic sphere. According to Mr. Ali, all the countries around the globe have suffered in their economic domain. Though, the level and degree of economic effects vary. According to research, he stated, 80 countries have sought help from the IMF to bail out from the coronavirus situation.

Fourth Domain is diplomatic. In the diplomatic domain, it is a unique opportunity for the diplomats and countries to come and work together. They can learn through sharing their experience with the COVID-19.

**Concluding Remarks by Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI (M) (Retd) – President CGSS**

Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI (M) (Retd) concluded the online conference by highlighting the need for a regional cooperative strategy to deal with this common threat. He mentioned that to succeed against this common threat, all the countries need to come together and work collectively.

Briefly, he mentioned the role of COVID-19 as a possible catalyst for the change in the world order.